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A

LETTER

TO A

FRIEND,

WHO RECEIVED HIS THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION UNDER THE INSTRUCTION OF

DR. EMMONS,

CONCERNING THE DOCTRINE WHICH TEACHES THAT IMPENITENT SINNERS HAVE NATURAL POWER TO MAKE THEMSELVES NEW HEARTS.

BY NATHANIEL NILES, A. M.

WINDSOR:

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A LETTER, &c.

DEAR SIR,

WERE it in my power, I ſhould very freely comply with your requeſt that I would inform you of my opinion whether the Doctrine of the natural power of impenitent ſinners to renew their own hearts, as it is taught by Drs. EMMONS, SPRING, and CRANE be founded in truth; but I cannot do it, for indeed I am wholly at a loſs as to their real meaning. They are thought to agree with each other, reſpecting this doctrine, yet they do not, I think, agree in their manner of ſtating it; ſeveral of the terms they uſe are ambigious, and I am not able to decide what the very point is, to which they deſign to direct their arguments.

But although I cannot give an opinion on the point you propoſe, I will ſtate ſome of the occaſions of my doubt, more diſtinctly than I have already done. In doing this, I will endeavor to explain ſome of the terms which are uſed by thoſe who treat on this ſubject—remark on the manner in which theſe gentlemen treat it----on the arguments they employ, and on the probable conſequences of this doctrine as it is propoſed by theſe gentlemen.

I. I propoſe to explain ſome of the terms uſed in the common diſcuſſion of this ſubject.

1. By the term *heart*, as it is uſed in morals, different writers ſeem to mean different things. Some intend no more than a certain claſs of mental

operations and exercises; all the operations of that faculty which they call the *will* and no other, are included in this class. Others consider the heart as something antecedent to all these operations—as a property or aptitude of the mind to become the subject, or if you please the agent in these operations. The importance of this difference of meaning would show itself, were we to debate the question whether men have the power to make themselves new hearts; because, if all the operations of this class arise from, and therefore presuppose a heart, it is naturally impossible that the heart should be made by any of these operations. Effects cannot produce their causes. While on supposition, that the heart is exercise and nothing else, it is possible to conceive that we might be said, although improperly, to make our hearts by antecedent exercises. It is in the nature of things as possible for one to will to *will*, as it is to will to move. It does not seem impossible for God to make a law of mental operation according to which willing to will, should as certainly be followed by willing, as willing to move our hands is followed by the motion willed.

The heart we are speaking of is termed *new*, because it supercedes a different kind of heart. The heart which is common to all the natural descendants of Adam, as soon as they have a moral being, is wholly sinful; whereas that which supercedes it when persons undergo a saving change, is holy. So that, if by heart, we intend no more than such a general temper or state of the mind, as prepares it to bring forth affections and volitions; by a *new* heart will be meant, such an one as prepares it to bring forth *holy* affections and volitions. But if we mean by a heart, nothing besides affections and volitions, then by a new heart we shall intend no more than *holy* affections and volition. Accordingly the very first holy exercise is called a new heart; the person who is the subject of this single exercise is said to have a new heart, and he has no

more than a new heart after he has been the ſubject of ever ſo many holy exerciſes. All theſe exerciſes would conſtitute but one new heart.

Since then the very firſt holy exerciſe is a new heart, and ſince many people ſeem to place the great difficulty which they think there is in effecting a change of character, from ſinful to holy, in the production of this firſt exerciſe, we may, with both ſafety and advantage, limit our notion of a new heart, to this firſt holy exerciſe, when we enquire whether ſinners have power to make themſelves new hearts. By doing this we may ſave ourſelves from being miſled by a confuſion and multiplicity of objects, and ſhow others that we are attending to the very queſtion which they wiſh to ſee elucidated.

3. The term *will* is ſometimes uſed to expreſs what has been called the faculty of willing and ſometimes, willing itſelf. Some conſider the faculty of will, as the preparation, or fittedneſs of the mind to be the ſubject both of its various affections, and alſo of its efforts to perform bodily actions, or to produce any other effect. Thoſe who give it this extenſive ſignification uſe it alſo in the ſame extent, to ſignify mental exerciſes, as well the various affections ſuch as loving, and hating, hoping and fearing, repenting and believing, as the efforts made by the mind to produce effects, ſuch as bodily motion, &c. I ſhall at preſent ſuppoſe the term *will* to have ſuch, and ſo extenſive a meaning.

4. The term *make* needs explanation. When one is directed to *make* any thing, as the mechanic makes his wares, he will conſider himſelf as being directed to produce it of deſign. This ſuppoſes a preceding volition to produce the very effect required. Without ſuch volition he would not comply with the requiſition, nor if the event required ſhould take place, without his previous deſign to produce it, would it be imputed to him. So that the perſon *making*, is ſaid to be the

cauſe, and the thing *made*, an effect, cauſed by his willing it. The perſon, however, is not thought to be in the higheſt and moſt proper ſenſe the efficient cauſe: but he is ſuch in the higheſt ſenſe in which creatures are efficient cauſes. Such ſeems to be the more common meaning of this term. But,

There is another uſe of this term which ought to be particularly noticed. God requires ſinners to make themſelves a new heart and a right ſpirit. The thing intended by this command ſeems to have been expreſſed by our Saviour when he ſaid *be ye holy*. Dr. Crane, appears ſometimes to have underſtood the command to make a new heart, in this ſenſe, and not to underſtand the making required, to conſiſt in producing a new heart of previous deſign, but in his acceptation, the *having* of thoſe exerciſes which he ſeems to ſuppoſe, conſtitute the new heart, is the very *making* intended. Of repentance, faith, and love to God, he ſays, "Theſe exerciſes are making a new heart." Suppoſing then that I underſtand this repreſentation of Dr. Crane, and that he gives the true meaning of the term *make* as it is uſed in the command requiring ſinners to make them new hearts, it ſeems highly proper and needful that we ſhould conſtantly and clearly diſtinguiſh this meaning from the former, both when we enquire whether, and in what ſenſe ſinners have power to make themſelves new hearts; and when we examine a multitude of paſſages, which ſeem to be of the ſame import with that laſt mentioned. The importance of applying this diſtinction in theſe caſes will appear in a ſtrong light if we conſider that without it we ſhould be in danger of aſcribing the ſame identical operation, and in the ſame ſenſe, both to God and man.

To *make* a new heart in the firſt ſenſe, is repreſented in ſcripture as one of thoſe works which are peculiar to God; while to *have* a new heart and holy exerciſes and affections, belongs to the renewed ſinner,

God indeed *cauſes* them but he is not the ſubject of them. The renewed perſon is the ſubject but not the cauſe of them.

If we do not bear in mind this difference of meaning, it is eaſy to conceive that we are in danger of infering from the ſcriptures, either that God *wills* and *feels* in us, that which he requires us to will and feel; or elſe, that he requires of us to *cauſe* in ourſelves what HE alone can *cauſe* in us. It is believed that this confuſion may be effectually avoided by a due application of this diſtinction between the different ſenſes of the term *make*, and of others of the ſame import.

5. If any term employed by Metaphyſicians need explanation it muſt be the term *power*. I ſhall however attempt no further explanation of it than what relates to the ſuppoſed power of ſinners to make themſelves new hearts.

I conceive of but two kinds of power predicable of the human mind, which can any way affect the ſubject before us. One of theſe conſiſts in mental properties, or qualities. The other in a connexion eſtabliſhed by our Maker between our imperate acts of willing, and their direct objects. The diſtinction between theſe, is very obvious. The firſt conſiſt in what may be conſidered as going to conſtitute each individual mind ſuch as it is in itſelf, the other is a mere relation between two objects, namely, a volition to do a certain action, or to produce a certain effect, and the conſequent occurrence of ſuch action or effect.

1. One kind of human power conſiſts in the properties or qualities of the individuals of the ſpecies. Our faculties of underſtanding, of feeling pleaſure and pain, and of willing are ſo many properties of our minds. By theſe we are fitted to become the ſubjects of certain operations and effects. We are fitted to perceive under given circumſtances, external objects; to feel pleaſure and pain; and to will ſuch and ſuch bodily motions and mental attention, and operations. Theſe facul-

ties are indeed called powers of the mind; and as each has its diſtinct office each is diſtinguiſhed from the other by a different denomination. The underſtanding is called the *power* of *perception*, *underſtanding* &c. the faculty of feeling pleaſure and pain, is the *power* of feeling them, and the *faculty* of will is called the *power* of willing. This laſt is never called the power of perceiving, knowing or underſtanding; nor have we been uſed to call the firſt a power or ability of willing. If then repenting, believing, and loving, be ſo many acts of willing, it ſeems hardly proper to call the underſtanding whether it be ſtrong, or weak, a power, of loving, repenting and believing, becauſe we ſhould in that caſe, call it a power of *willing*.

By theſe properties we are capable of becoming holy. They are qualifications fitting us to be ſubjects of holy operations, and they are indiſpenſible prerequiſities to holineſs: But they are no otherwiſe powers than are the properties of matter. The properties of every ſpecies of animal, of each kind of vegitable, and of each portion of dead matter, fit them reſpectively, to become ſubjects of certain operations and effects. So that in this reſpect, our faculties and properties although they are of different ſpecies, are of the ſame general nature with them.

As we cannot will an object without ſome conception of it, ſo perhaps, we could not be endowed with the faculty of willing without the faculty of conceiving, which is the faculty of underſtanding. This faculty, although it conſtitutes in part our fitneſs to *will*, is not of itſelf enough. Its actual operations which depend on and flow from the faculty, are additional and needful preparatories to willing. They prepare us to become ſubjects of willing, but they do not enſure it. They are indiſpenſible prerequiſites, but they do not bring the object within our power.—Other things are as eſſentialy prerequiſites as theſe, but we never call them powers. Our being, the act of

our Maker in giving it, and his own being are each of them as essential prerequisites, as either the faculty or operations of understanding; but this circumstance would not justify us in calling them our power of loving, repenting, &c. Like the understanding and its operations; the faculties of willing and feeling pleasure and pain, and some of their operations are necessarily presupposed, in our power to perform the ordinary actions of life, as the mechanical powers are presupposed in some of the effects produced in consequence of human volition. But even that volition itself which aims directly at some effect, and immediately precedes it, is not the power by which it is produced. There must be something more than this, for we often find that the event does not follow upon our willing it. The act of willing has indeed been considered as a particular kind, and has obtained the name of power. And to distinguish it from other powers, it has been termed *moral* power. It deserves a more particular attention.

Whatever there is in man of a moral nature has been denominated *moral power*. Each moral quality or property; each affection and volition has been called a moral power, to do these things toward which they severally point. Thus the holy quality or temper of mind is a *moral* power in the person to become a subject of holy affections; holy affections, or immanent acts of the will, as some call them, are so many moral powers, to put forth, or exert, imperate acts, which are such as have for their objects some change or effect, such as bodily motion, and direction of the attention to such subjects as we choose; and each of these imperate acts of the will, which are more commonly called volitions, is denominated a moral power, to produce the effect willed.

The epithet *moral*, used in these instances, is expressive of the morality of the *thing* which is called a power. The volition, which is called a moral power, is

denominated a power, to expreſs ſome relation it bears to the occurrence of the event willed, as that of a preparative, or prerequiſite to the occurrence of the event willed, or ſome other relation. This ſame volition is called *moral*, to indicate that it is of a moral nature,—that it bears ſome relation to the rule of moral rectitude—that it is holy or ſinful. The term *moral* is employed to diſtinguiſh the volition, affection or temper, from every thing which is not of a moral nature. It is not deſigned as any mark of diſtinction between that which conſtitutes theſe volitions, &c. ſo many *powers*, and that which conſtitutes other natural powers, nor to diſtinguiſh the nature of this power from the nature of other powers. Although the *faculty* of willing, is called the *moral* faculty, and volition a moral power, yet this faculty, and its operations, ſtill hold the ſame rank in the ſame claſs of powers, with the faculty of underſtanding and its operations. The only difference between them, is this. The heart and its operations are of a moral nature, but the intellect and its operations are not. Every thing that could be properly intended by calling volition a moral power, would be as fully obtained by calling it a moral exerciſe. The morality of the exerciſe, produces no change in the power which conſiſts in this exerciſe. Whether volition were or were not of a moral nature, it would, under the notion of a power, be ſtill the ſame. Some volitions are holy, and ſome ſinful; but this difference in their morality, occaſions no difference either in the nature or extent of the power. A good heart ſends forth good ſtreams—bears good fruit. An evil heart ſends out evil ſtreams, bears evil fruit. Each is equally adapted to the production of its proper fruit. Analogouſly, if the heart were not of a moral nature, it would, nevertheleſs, like the good and evil heart, and with equal ſpontaniouſneſs, bring forth its proper fruits. The morality of a volition neither ſtrengthens nor marrs its connexion with the object at which it directly aims.

From these remarks it appears, that although volition is a moral object, it is also a natural *power*. It is one of those prerequisites and preparatives which all taken together constitute that discription of natural power to which we have already attended.

If that kind of power which consists in faculties and capacities, means, preparatives, or prerequisites to the effect, be natural power, the want of these is want of natural power. Since therefore the faculty of willing and its operations are of this discription, the want of them, or any one of them which is a necessary prerequisite, if it be needful to the production of any effect according to the established laws of nature, is an instance of natural impotency. I must repeat, that volition is not called a power because of its moral nature. It does not derive its quality of power from this nature, nor does its morality arise from, nor depend on its quality of power, (if indeed it be a quality.) It is a thing in its own nature moral; it also serves as a mean to facilitate the production of effects, in the same manner as knowledge, or any other mean serves this purpose. Whether this power of volition be effectual or ineffectual, its moral nature is still the same, and whether it be virtuous or vicious, its efficacy is the same. A piece of gold has several very different attributes. It has intrinsic worth; it has a beautiful colour; is remarkably heavy; it answers its proper standard; it serves as a currency; it may be employed as a standard weight. It has then very different attributes and may be applied to very different purposes. We may not say that since it is money, it cannot be a true weight in the scale. But it would be no more absurd to say thus, than it is to say volition, or any moral affection, cannot be a natural power, because it is a moral object. Whether they were powers or not, they would still be the same moral objects, equally approvable or censurable by conscience and by God, and equally proper objects of complacence or

averſion. From theſe conſiderations, it ſeems to me evident, that affections, volitions, &c. may be called natural powers in the ſame ſenſe in which perception, knowledge, intelligence, memory, or any other property of the ſoul may be ſo called. Of courſe, the want of them, where they are needful to an effect, may as properly be pronounced a defect, of natural power, as may the want of underſtanding or bodily ſtrength. It alſo ſeems as evident that, conſidering them in this light does not at all derogate from their morality.

All things, whether agents, actions or patients, have *natural* qualities, properties and attributes. Actions as well as ſubſtances have attributes, and influences which are not of a moral nature. Morality is only a particular quality belonging to rational beings and their exerciſes only.

I have dwelt the longer on this ſubject becauſe it ſeems to me not to have been ſufficiently attended to.

It is no doubt a perfectly correct opinion that in many caſes the want of competent underſtanding or bodily ſtrength, ought to be received as a good excuſe for not having performed certain actions; although the want of heart or will, would not furniſh even a ſhadow of excuſe. The reaſon of this difference does not appear to be what is often alledged, that in one caſe the power which was wanted was natural, and in the other moral; but that in one caſe, there was a good, and in the other a bad heart. Therefore the failure in one was not imputed, while that of the other was. The reaſon is obvious. If the failure be in the will, it is a *moral* failure, and not the leſs ſo becauſe there is alſo in the ſame failure of the will a *natural* defect of power. But if there be no failure in the will, there is no moral failure or defect. The will is preſent both in its natural and moral capacity; but as a *power*, is deſerted by other natural powers, without the acceſſion of which, it is inſufficient. No blame therefore

ought to attach here. It ought to attach only and always to *moral* defect, or wrong.

To account for the fact that impenitent sinners do not become holy, some have thought it sufficient to say, that they are destitute of a moral power to become holy. By this must be meant that they are not willing, or, to express it otherwise, that they have no volition to become holy; because moral power to be holy and volition to be holy, intend the same thing. Let us stop a moment to observe some of the bearings of this opinion.

Moral impotency consists in want of some certain volition. For what is this volition needful in the present case? To *constitute* holiness? or to *produce* it, as I produce motion in my hand by a volition? I see no need of any volition in this case, except to answer one of these purposes.

Is the meaning this? If the sinner had the needful volition, it would constitute him a holy person. If so, the volition is both a power to be holy, and the very holiness for which the power was needed. This is the same as to say, the reason why the man is not holy, is, that he is not holy. It is to say, the thing done is the proper power of doing it. And the want of the thing itself is the inability of the man to do it.

Is the meaning this? If the sinner, while impenitent, should have a volition to become holy, he would in consequence, become holy. If such be the meaning, then an unholy volition is supposed to be the action by which holiness is or may be produced. According to this opinion, the *moral* power of *Calvinists*, leaps at a single bound, over precipices and gulfs, to pass which, costs the *self-determining* power of *Arminians* much time, many a tugging, weary step, and many a dreadful plunge and painful bruising.

According to the first meaning supposed, the power comes too late; as it does not arrive until the effect proposed has taken place; or else there is at least one

holy volition before the firſt. According to the latter meaning, moral power to produce holineſs is a ſin; becauſe all the volitions of the impenitent are ſuppoſed to be ſins.

Theſe remarks if correct, ſhow, (1ſt.) that however proper it may be to call diſpoſition, affection or volition *moral power*, it ought not to be underſtood, that by giving them this name, we deny that they are natural powers of the ſame general kind with other properties, and operations of the mind. They are all alike preparations, and prerequiſites to our being ſubjects of certain operations and effects, and alſo for the production of effects by us. (2d.) They ſhow that it is at once as eaſy and more familiar, literal and intelligible to ſay, one has a diſpoſition, or volition, or that he is willing to do a thing, than to ſay he has moral power to do it; and to ſay he is not willing, than to ſay he is morally unable, or that he labours under a moral impotence with reſpect to doing it—to ſay that a bad heart is a wicked thing, than to ſay that a bad heart is moral inability to do right, and that a moral inability to do right is a wicked thing.

Having attempted to explain why, and in what ſenſe mental faculties, capacities, and operations are denominated powers, and why they are ſaid to be natural, and alſo in what ſenſe bodily ſtrength is called a natural power, I will proceed,

2. To explain another and very different ſort of power, namely, that which conſiſts in a ſure connexion between thoſe efforts of mind to produce ſome change, which are commonly called volitions, and thoſe changes or events which we will to produce. This is that power by which we perform the ordinary actions of life, and produce the other ordinary effects of willing. When an action or event takes place upon my willnig it, I ſay I had power to perform it. If I have willed it, and it does not take place, I ſay I had not power to do or effect it. When I believe it would

take place in conſequence of my willing it, I ſay I have power to do or perform it: but if I believe it would not take place although I ſhould will it, I ſay I have not power to perform or effect it. We have power over thoſe events and thoſe only, which are in ſuch a ſenſe under the controul of our will, as that they take place, or do not take place according as we will them to be or not to be.

This kind of power involves three diſtinct and very different ideas, or notions, namely of a volition, of its direct object, and of a ſure connexion between them.

The connexion may be thus deſcribed: The volition deſigning the event, is an antecedent to the event: The event is a conſequent of the volition. As antecedent and conſequent they are ſo bound together by the laws of nature that the antecedent can never happen without being followed by the conſequent effect. But to explain this ſubject more fully it muſt be remarked;

(1.) That the volition muſt be attended with certain circumſtances. For the production of events agreeably to the laws of nature, in many caſes, a variety of means muſt be called into operation. Theſe means may be under the control of my will, and yet I may, not apply them; now, if omitting to apply them, I will the event, it may not follow. Still the event may be connected, in the ſenſe intended with my willing it. It is in my option whether to apply the means or not. If I apply them, the reſult will prove that there was a connexion between my willing and the event willed. When it is ſaid that this kind of power conſiſts in this connexion, it is ſuppoſed that all the needful means are applied; and that the application of them is under the controul of my will: Otherwiſe I may will an event which is, in the ſenſe intended, within my power, and yet it may not follow. All this notwithſtanding, the event may be dependent on, and

connected with my willing it: for if I *really* will it, or choose, all things considered, to have it take place; I shall also choose to apply all those means, which seem to me to be needful.

(2.) An event which is not under the control of my will, may be brought about immediately after my willing it, by some other secondary agent, and in such a manner, as to appear to me to be the proper result, and effect of my own volition. But the connexion in this case would be accidental, and not stated and established. Such a connexion would not be the power spoken of.

It has been already observed that the power we are considering is that which we have to perform the ordinary actions of life. I wish this may be particularly noticed, and that this opinion may be fairly canvased. I believe it is universally said, where the English language is spoken, that one cannot do a thing when it would not follow upon his willing it. Such a person is said either to have lost his power, or not to have any, with respect to that event. Persons frequently say they believe they *can*, or have power to do such and such things. What they mean is neither more nor less than that they believe the proposed event would follow, if they should will it. When children are told that they can do one thing, but that they cannot do another; they understand the meaning to be that the first would follow upon their willing it, and that the last would not. Such, undoubtedly, is the most common and proper meaning, and acceptation of the terms, power, want of power, ability, inability, can, and cannot.

It is however observable that in order to judge whether we can or cannot, we with more or less attention consider what means are needful, and whether they are under the control of our wills: The reason of our attending more explicitly to the means, seems to be a settled assurance that if all the needful means

be applied, the connexion between our willing the event and its occurrence, is aſcertained. By knowing the means we have to effect the propoſed object, we find means of deciding whether the event would follow upon our willing it. So that in all its preliminary inquiries, concerning means, the mind is ſtill looking forward to the queſtion whether the event would follow upon its being willed.

If the power I have now endeavored to explain, is the object to which the attention of every one is naturally turned, when he is told, that he has power to do this or that, thoſe who tell him ſo, ſurely ought to be careful not to affix to it any different meaning. They ought not to teach us that we have the *ſame* power to produce any effect that we have to perform the common actions of life, if they mean any other power than that which has now been explained; becauſe this is the power by which, mankind, generally, if not univerſally, believe ſuch actions are performed.

From the foregoing obſervations, it ſeems evident that two very different kinds of power belong to man: one of which conſiſts in properties, qualities, capacities, faculties both of body and mind, together with their ſeveral operations, and in ſhort, all the neceſſary means of producing effects; the other, conſiſts in a ſure connexion between willing an event and its occurrence. The powers of the firſt kind, are preſuppoſed in the laſt. If any one of them be wanting, the connexion fails.

I aſſert my poſſeſſion of two of the firſt kind of powers, by ſaying, I have underſtanding and bodily ſtrength; but I do not in this way expreſs the latter power. To expreſs *it*, I ſay, if I will any propoſed bodily action, or other event, it will follow. The firſt powers are means, the laſt a mere relation between two objects.

The terms *can*, *able*, *ability*, ſeem to convey an idea of that power which volition has over events, and not any property, or means; or, if they are expreſſive of theſe, they comprehend *all* the means needful to

conſtitute the complex or collective power which has been noticed, and intimate that, *all* theſe means, being ready, the queſtion, whether the event ſhall take place, or not, lies to be decided by the will.

The phraſe, *you can if you will*, ſeems to deſign two things, (1.) that nothing but a volition to produce the ſuppoſed event, is wanting. (2.) That ſuch a volition is an indiſpenſible link in the chain of thoſe cauſes which muſt precede the event. Hence, it ſeems improper to ſay, you can be holy, or repent, love, believe, &c. *if you will*, when our meaning might be fully expreſſed by ſaying, if you had ſuch volitions as conſtitute repentance, love, and faith, you would have theſe graces.

II. I now proceed to make ſome ſuch remarks on the manner in which the gentlemen you named, treat the ſubject of the power of ſinners to make themſelves new hearts, as will, in ſome meaſure, account for the doubts I entertain reſpecting their real meaning.

I ſhall preſume theſe gentlemen, and others who are generally thought to agree with them in opinion reſpecting the ſubject in queſtion, really agree, although they do not uſe the ſame phraſiology. On this preſumption I ſhall conſider what one ſays, as expreſſing the ſentiments of the whole body. I ſhall not however, take this liberty in any inſtance in which I believe the ſentiment may not be fairly deduced from what the gentlemen have advanced.

1. Theſe gentlemen ſay, almoſt, in ſo many words, that impenitent ſinners have the ſame power to make themſelves new hearts, and work out their own ſalvation, which they have to perform the ordinary actions of life, and that they can as eaſily perform the one as the other. Such poſitions, if taken by themſelves, would lead us to believe that what they mean to expreſs, is, that a new heart would as certainly follow upon its being willed, as the motion of our hands follows a will to move them. Dr. Crane moſt evidently

talks, throughout his two ſermons on this ſubject, in a ſtrain like this. Dr. Spring, in his *Diſquiſitions*, gives us two explanations of what he intends by natural power. One of them is as follows. "For, natural inability conſiſts in being unable to do a thing, when we cannot do it if we will, becauſe of ſome impeding defect or obſtacle that is extrinſic to the will." This is, indeed, rather an account of inability than of power, but according to it, natural power muſt be ability to do a thing if we will. Says Dr. Crane, "All the invitations of the goſpel evidently ſuppoſe that ſinners *can if they will*, obey all the divine commands." Again, ſpeaking of ſinners he ſays, "They are naturally as able to make themſelves new hearts as they are to perform any ſervice." Dr. Emmons ſays in his ſecond ſermon on Eph. ii. 12, 13, "They (ſinners) are *as* able to work out their own ſalvation, as to perform the common actions of life." Again, "Theſe" (ſcripture) "ſimilitudes plainly ſuppoſe that every ſinner is *as* able to embrace the goſpel, as a thirſty man is to drink water, or an hungry man to eat the moſt delicious food." On theſe paſſages I remark, that they evidently ſuppoſe, and ſome of them plainly expreſs, that ſinners are *as* able to be holy, and to come to Chriſt, as they are to perform any of the common actions of life. When ſinners are ſaid to be *as able*, I conceive the meaning to be, that they have all the ſame powers and in as great perfection, to be holy, to love God, and to embrace Chriſt, which they have to eat their food, and drink their liquors. Now, with reſpect to the ordinary actions of life, ſinners have ſuch a power over them, that if they will the actions, the actions certainly follow. This is that power which we have to perform the common, voluntary, external, actions of life. The quotation from Dr. Spring is of the ſame import. He pleads, that ſinners have natural power to do their duty in all its parts, and evidently places their power in a connexion between

their willing to perform an action, and the taking place of the action willed.

In the *arguments* uſed by Dr. Crane, and Dr. Emmons, the ſame notion of power is held up. Dr. Crane's third argument is thus propoſed. "All impenitent ſinners have as much natual power to perform any religious duty as they have to commit any ſin." Again he ſays, "Every ſinner is in poſſeſſion of *all* the natural power which he needs, in order to look to Chriſt." Every ſinner then, has *that* power which we have to perform the common actions of life.

Theſe gentlemen believe, that ſinners are criminal for not repenting. No doubt they are; but they ſuppoſe that ſinners could not be criminal for not repenting, if they had not the *ſame* power to repent, which a hungry man has to eat his food, or to perform any other ordinary action of life. To eſtabliſh this point they introduce the divine declaration that a "man is accepted, according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not." By this they *do* ſhow that if a man has no feet, he is not criminal for not uſing them, and they alſo *attempt* to ſhow that if a man have not *all* the *natural* power to love God, repent of ſin, and believe in Chriſt, which we have to perform the ordinary actions of life, he is not criminal for not being the ſubject of theſe holy exerciſes. Now laying all this together, it is at firſt bluſh, very difficult not to believe that by the power which they ſay ſinners have to make themſelves new hearts, is intended that which conſiſts in a ſure connexion between willing an event and the event willed. But this power, if it does not *conſiſt* in the connexion ſo often mentioned, to ſay the leaſt, certainly *implies* it. This power is never found where the following things are not, viz. a will to do ſomething, and a view or conception of the action or thing to be done, and a connexion between the willing, and the thing willed. The power to raiſe my hand, can never be manifeſted or real-

iſed, untill I will to raiſe it, and it riſes in conſequence of the volition. Wherever this power is, the the willing, and the object willed, (both which are ſuppoſed in the power,) are different from each other. I know that one very great man ſeems, at an unlucky moment, not to have adverted to this circumſtance although it is a very important one in conſidering the ſubject of the ſinners power to be holy. It alſo ſeems to me that many others have been miſled by not attending to it. I can hardly doubt but that ſome have been ſo far deceived by the term *will* as to paſs this diſtinction without notice. When it is ſaid we can if we *will*, move our limbs, they conclude that it may be ſaid, in the ſame ſenſe, that we can repent if we will. They think of repenting under the notion of willing, and give the ſame meaning to both. According to their conceptions, if I have that act of willing which they call repentance, then I do repent, but to compare *willing to repent*, with willing to *ſpeak*, the willing and repenting, ought to be as diſtinct, and as clearly diſtinguiſhed from each other, as *willing* to ſpeak, is, from *ſpeaking*. The repentance muſt be the object of the willing, and if I have the ſame power to repent which I have to perform the common actions of life, I can by an antecedent volition, inſure my conſequent repentance. Let us then ſuppoſe an impenitent ſinner to have this power to exert his firſt act of repenting. His act of willing to repent, muſt precede his firſt act of repenting, as my willing to move my hand precedes its motions. Of conſequence, his *willing* to repent, is not *repentance* but an act of his impenitent mind, and therefore wholly ſinful. If then theſe gentlemen mean as they ſay, they muſt believe that the ſinner can, by his ſinful volition, produce repentance in the ſame ſenſe in which I produce motion in my hand, that is, by willing it.

This is the concluſion to which we are conducted by that part of what theſe gentlemen ſay on this ſub-

ject, which has been noticed above; and paying no attention to any thing else they may have said, we should easily understand them.

But there are considerations, besides those suggested by the general opinions, and accurate powers of those gentlemen, which weigh much against our deciding that they, understandingly believe, sinners have the *same* power—as *much* power—that they are *as* able, and can *as easily* make themselves new hearts, as perform the ordinary actions of life. For

1. They do not pretend, so far as I am informed, that there is the least shadow of evidence of an established connection between any volition of an impenitent sinner to renew his heart, and its consequent renovation. Yet had they understood the sinner's power to be what their language seems clearly to import, we cannot conceive it possible that they should have been silent on this head. Had they seen the indispensible need which mankind generally see, of such a connexion, in order to the having of that power by which we perform the common actions of life, they would have endeavored to prove such a connexion between the willing of the sinner to be holy and his consequent holiness; or else they would have abandoned the doctrine which gives that power to sinners; and it seems incredible that they should not have seen the need of this connexion.

2. Dr. SPRING has explicitly told us what he means by natural power, not incidentally but of set design. He asks, "What is natural ability?" and answers, "Natural ability is the intellectual and bodily strength of a man to perform every action which God requires of him." Here we are plainly told what natural ability is. It consists of two kinds of strength, *intellectual* and *bodily*. In considering the natural power of a sinner to make himself a new heart, we may, I think, safely lay aside the *bodily* strength, and suppose the doctor to consider intellectual strength as constituting the

power of the ſinner. By this kind of ſtrength, I underſtand the doctor to intend a good underſtanding. Now if this be his meaning, the power which he attributes to the ſinner is as widely different from that which we have to perform the common actions of life, as is a property of the mind, from a connexion between volition and its direct object.

I know not that the other two gentlemen have, either of them, profeſſedly explained what they mean by natural power. They ſeem to have conſidered the ſubject as ſufficiently underſtood by all their readers; yet from parts of what they ſay reſpecting it, I believe it might be fairly inferred that they, like Dr. Spring, intend no more than underſtanding. I am aware that they may reply that they have ſaid many things which imply much more than this; even all that goes to conſtitute our power to perform the common actions of life; but this, you will readily perceive, tends rather to increaſe, than to remove my doubts.

Since I cannot believe it to be an opinion of theſe gentlemen that ſinners have that very power to make themſelves new hearts, which we have to perform the common actions of life; and ſince I have their own declaration either expreſſed or implied, that they mean no more than underſtanding, faculties and capacities, which are only ſo many properties of mind, ſhall I not believe theſe to be the very things they intend by the natural power of ſinners to make themſelves new hearts? I doubt.

Firſt. Becauſe, were they to *prove*, or ſinners to *allow* that we all have thoſe faculties, capacities and underſtanding, it would not anſwer the purpoſe to which it is applied: It would not meet the argument uſed by the ſinner, to ſhow that he would not be worthy of blame for continuing impenitent, as it is deſigned to do.

The argument of the ſinner is this. "You ſay, I

am criminal for not having a new heart, but you muſt be in the wrong, for it is a fact that I have not power to make ſuch a heart. It is alſo a fact, that God does not deem men criminal for not doing what they have not power to do. If one has no hands or feet, God never blames him for not walking, or handling. If he has no money to give, he is not obliged to give it. If he has but a weak underſtanding, God does not blame him for not comprehending all the deep myſteries of religion. In ſhort, with God, a man is accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. Since therefore, I have not power to repent and make myſelf a new heart, I ſhall never be condemned for not doing it." This is the argument to be met and invalidated. There are two very different modes of attempting to obviate it: one, by acknowledging the ſinners impotency, and ſhowing him that it affords him no juſtifying excuſe for remaining impenitent; the other, by acknowledging the juſtneſs of his reaſoning, and maintaining that he has power to repent and become holy. This laſt is the method taken by theſe gentlemen: and in order to ſucceed, it behoves them to ſhow that ſinners have that very power to make themſelves new hearts, to repent and believe, which is needful in order to prove them criminal, in neglecting ſuch external actions as are required of thoſe who have this power; or in other words, that they have all the power in this caſe, which they have to eat, and to drink, to walk or to ſpeak: But this is that power, which at leaſt, *involves* in it a ſure connexion between willing an event, by a preceding volition, and the conſequent occurrence of the event willed. Let me have all the powers, you may be pleaſed to ſuppoſe, to read the Bible, to repeat the Lord's prayer, or to relieve the diſtreſſed; yet, if theſe operations do not take place, upon my willing them, I am excuſable in neglecting to perform them. Now, ſince theſe gentlemen admit

the juſtice of the reaſoning of the ſinner, they muſt, to be conſiſtent with themſelves, ſay, either, that the the ſinner is excuſable for remaining impenitent, or elſe, that he has the ſame power to make himſelf a new heart, that he has to perform the ordinary actions of life. To ſuppoſe, then, that theſe gentlemen mean no more by the ſinners power, than natural faculties, capacities, underſtanding &c. is to ſuppoſe them to evade the reaſoning of the ſinner, and to ſay nothing to the purpoſe. Thinking along in this way, I am forced to ſtop, and doubt, whether underſtanding, natural powers, and faculties, are all they mean by a ſinner's power to make himſelf a new heart.

Sinners, who are not very clearly informed as to the meaning of theſe gentlemen, muſt believe they mean ſomething more than any properties inherent either in the body or mind. And,

Secondly, There is another circumſtance which ſeems to render it highly improbable, that theſe gentlemen mean no more than faculties, capacities, and underſtanding, by the power they aſcribe to ſinners to make themſelves new hearts. They evidently believe, that many deny the doctrine which they mean to inculcate. Yet I cannot think they believe, any man denies that any perſon, from the infant at the breaſt, to the infancy of old age—from the ſavage to the philoſopher, and from the pagan to the ſaint has faculties and capacities, underſtanding, will, and a degree of bodily ſtrength. The thing therefore, which they would prove, muſt be ſomething elſe. But, if this be all they mean, I think they may reſt aſſured that no ſort of proof is needful in the caſe. For all men take for granted, the thing for which they contend. It ſeems to me they muſt be aware of this fact. What occaſion then for, ever mentioning this power? But if, though acknowledged, this truth is apt to be

forgotten, there surely can need no reasoning to prove it: The mere mention of it is enough.

While thinking on this subject, I have sometimes queried thus with myself. What would these gentlemen think? How would they feel? were they, upon entering a place of public worship on the Sabbath, to hear a grave man propose from the desk, as an important doctrine, and which ought to be frequently and forceably illucidated, argued, and confirmed, because very many erroniously, and dangerously deny it; that all men have *mental faculties* and *capacities*, such as *understanding*, and *will*, and, at least, some degree of *bodily strength?* I have conceived the preacher as going on first, to explain, then to prove his doctrine; first from the scriptures, and then from reason----that he then proceeds to state and answer the objections of gainsayers; then, proceeding to his improvement, he concludes his discourse by inferring from it, that sinners are highly culpable for continuing impenitent. It has seemed to me that while he was seriously attending to his doctrinal observations, *they* could not be *serious*, and that when he came to infer the criminality of sinners, they would think his doctrine did not afford such an inference, although they would cordially acquiesce in the truth inferred. I confess, I should say, respecting the doctrinal part of the subject, with them, that "no man denies this doctrine, all men believe it—all this time and labor is lost, and worse than lost." But I should think the inference both correct and important; because I believe that to be unfriendly and disobedient, to a being so lovely and so worthy of obedience as God is, must be wrong; *morally* wrong, worthy of extreme detestation, whether the person could, or could not have repented, as easily as he could turn his hand. It further seems to me that a sinner, truly and deeply penitent, would have his attention and his heart too much occupied about the *sinful* odiousness of his own character, to allow himself time, or to find

any diſpoſition to go into a cold inquiry, whether he had the ſame power to repent, which he has to perform the common actions of life, that ſo he might determine whether he were a ſinner, and ought to repent, or not.

For ſuch reaſons as theſe conſiderations ſuggeſt, I cannot underſtand the gentlemen to have fully expreſſed what they mean, by the ſinner's power to make himſelf a new heart, when they ſay it conſiſts in natural faculties and capacities, or in intellectual and bodily ſtrength. I am therefore ſtill at a loſs.

It has been ſuggeſted that their meaning, when they ſay that ſinners can, if they will, love God, repent and make them new hearts, may, poſſibly, be thus expreſſed. If ſinners had wills prepared and diſpoſed to love God &c. then they could love him, or, otherwiſe thus, if ſinners had ſuch a willing as conſtitutes love to God, they could love him. I do not conſider them to mean thus. Becauſe they know, the ſame might be ſaid with equal truth of a ſtump or a ſtone, and they, no doubt, intend ſomething by what they ſay, which gives a greater power to man than can be aſcribed to dead matter.

Thus, whatever way I turn myſelf, to come at the meaning of theſe gentlemen, I ſtill find myſelf at fault. Whether this ariſes from defect in me, or in their manner of treating the ſubject, is left for your conſideration.

I will now as was propoſed, proceed,

III. To make ſome remarks on the arguments which have been adduced to prove that ſinners have the ſame power to make themſelves new hearts, that they have to perform the ordinary actions of life. Theſe, however multiform they appear, may, I believe be reduced to two.

1. The firſt of them may be thus expreſſed. Whenever one labours under a natural inability to comply with any divine command, he is not criminal, but

wholly excuſable, for not performing it. God himſelf has ſanctioned this opinion, by declaring in his word that he accepts men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not.—— That is, according to the natural power they poſſeſs. If the blind do not ſee his viſible works, or read his word—If the deaf do not liſten to pious converſation, and to the reading of the holy ſcriptures—If the man who is ſo weak or decrepit that he cannot go to help his brother who has fallen—If a man has no money to beſtow on the neceſſitous, theſe men are not charged as criminal, for not having done theſe things; and there is the very ſame reaſon why impenitent ſinners ſhould not be blamed for not making themſelves new hearts, if they want the ſame power to do it, which was wanting, to the perſons before ſuppoſed, to perform the ſeveral duties enjoined by the divine law. In caſe of this want of power, ſinners would be wholly excuſable. But we know, God does not excuſe ſinners for continuing in impenitency, but holds them guilty, and if they do not finally repent, they muſt be condemned to everlaſting puniſhment. Hence we may conclude that every ſinner has power to repent, and turn to God, to make himſelf a new heart, and to work out his own ſalvation. Such is the argument. But it is rather ſpecious than ſolid. This will appear if we conſider how perſons may excuſe or juſtify themſelves on different occaſions.

Suppoſe the ſame divine command to perform ſome external act, were given to two men, one of whom is perfectly able to perform it, and the other wholly unable. They both neglect to obey, and are in heart, equally diſobedient. Now I aſk, is either of them blameleſs? Are they equally criminal? I wiſh you to take this caſe in your hand----go directly to the bar of the judge of hearts, and aſk him to ſolve it. He judges, not, like man, by outward appearances. He judges by the heart. As a man thinketh in his heart ſo is he.

Put another caſe. Both theſe men are of a perfectly obedient ſpirit. He who has the ability does as he was directed, the other does not. Which is the moſt acceptable? To this queſtion your anſwer is ready. You ſay, they are equally acceptable. Why then, in the former caſe, ſhould they not be equally unacceptable. In the laſt caſe the omiſſion is eſtimated by the heart alone. Why ſhould it not be eſtimated in the former by the ſame rule?

In the firſt caſe, the impotent man's natural inability affords him no ſubſtantial excuſe----not even the leaſt paliation. It, however, furniſhes a pretence. It may aſſiſt him to deceive his fellow men who cannot look into his heart. But God ſees the heart. He cannot be deceived by the pretence, neither will he ſuffer himſelf to be mocked, by permitting it to be offered as an excuſe.

Could men look intuitively into human hearts as God looks into them, we ſhould not need to obſerve external conduct, in order to make an eſtimate of moral character and deſert. God will bring our works into view at the great day, not for the ſake of learning any thing concerning us, himſelf, but to ſhow others what we are.

I cannot omit obſerving here, that in the firſt of the two caſes put above, the impotent man was under both a natural and moral inability to obey his maker; but I preſume no one would eſteem him the leſs guilty, becauſe of his natural inability. In one inſtance then, (and millions of others might be adduced,) natural inability does not excuſe. Is not this equally true in all caſes in which natural and moral inability concur? In that paſſage of the holy ſcripture which teaches us that natural inability excuſes, it is pretty plainly intimated that it excuſes in thoſe caſes only in which there is firſt a *willing mind*. This is the firſt and great queſtion, Is there a willing mind? if there be, no ſeeming defect of obedience is noticed,

becauſe the only, ultimate queſtion is, Is there ſuch a mind? According to this principle, nothing can excuſe an impenitent ſinner, becauſe he has not this willing mind. His heart is not engaged in the love and ſervice of God. This being found, there is no occaſion to enquire whether he has or has not that power to repent which he has to perform the common actions of life. So long as the inquiry is, whether there be a willing mind, it is of importance to know how far conſtraint and reſtraint may have influenced, that which, without them, would be ſpontaneous fruits of the heart; but once the ſtate of the heart is aſcertained, all ſuch enquiries ſeem to be nugatory. Once it is aſcertained that the impenitent ſinner's heart is wrong, and to what degree it is ſo, it ſeems perfectly uſeleſs to diſpute whether he had or had not the ſame power, to make it better, which he has to perform the common actions of life.

All the affections, and paſſions, like water included in a caſk, ſpring out at every vent they find.—When we ſee a vent, but no water flowing, we conclude, that there is none within, or if there is, that it is obſtructed in its paſſage. The latter may be the fact, and yet the caſk may be found to be full. In this caſe the contents will be meaſured and eſtimated from the bottom, not to the vent, but to the top.—The all important enquiry is, What is the heart? If it does not flow forth in external action, there is reaſon for men to doubt whether it be good, unleſs ſome obſtacle is diſcovered. As ſoon as the obſtacle is diſcovered, the former cauſe of doubt ceaſes.

Every ſolid excuſe, or juſtification preſuppoſes a ſound heart. If the heart be unſound there is no poſſible foundation for juſtification or excuſe. When a man is called on for not giving to the poor, in obedience to the general command, if he can truly ſay, the ſeeming delinquency was not owing to want of heart, but to the want of what was directed to be given,

he may well be excuſed; but when he is queſtioned reſpecting the badneſs of his heart itſelf, he can reaſonably offer nothing in excuſe, beſides the unworthineſs of the object. Hence our Lord makes the ſlothful ſervant ſpeak his heart and ſay, "I knew that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou haſt not ſowed and gathering where thou haſt not ſtrewed," and ſpeaking thus, this ſervant ſpake the real ſentiments of every impenitent ſinner. If it could be made manifeſt to the conſciences of men, as it is felt in the hearts of the ſinner, that God is a hard maſter, they would excuſe impenitence itſelf; but till this is done, no excuſe, whether it be drawn from the temper of the ſinful heart, or from ſelf-named metaphyſical reaſoning, however ſpecious it may be, can have any real weight. Of courſe, the friends of God are under no obligation to grant to impenitent ſinners, that in order to be worthy of blame for their oppoſition to God, they muſt be acknowledged to have the ſame power to renew themſelves, which they have to perform the common actions of life.

The reaſon why we are not condemned for having omitted a commanded external action, ſeems to be this. All ſuch actions and omiſſions are, *prima facie*, evidence of a diſobedient ſpirit, becauſe they are ſuppoſed to flow ſpontaneouſly from the heart; ſo that, unleſs ſome evidence to the contrary appear, they are to be regarded as interpreters of the heart. But if it appear that they do not flow ſpontaneouſly from the heart, they cannot be regarded as correct interpreters.—— The heart *then*, only, ſhows itſelf through external actions and omiſſions, when they are directed by the will. Therefore, no bodily action is imputable to me, if it did not take place in obedience to my will. The ſame is true of all thoſe operations of the mind which take place in conſequence of having been ordered by the will. The *heart* cannot *immediately*, without an expreſs, imperate act of willing, produce any

of theſe. So that in all ſuch caſes, if the will do not direct, the conſequences are not to be imputed.— There are, however, many exerciſes of the heart, ſuch as love, hatred, hope and fear, which ſpring *immediately* from the *heart*, without any interpoſition of the will. Even thoſe who call love a volition, will not ſay that it is produced, like motion in my hand, by a preceding imperate volition. Theſe affections flowing as they do, ſpontaneouſly, and immediately from the heart, are, when known, fair expoſitors of it.— Whatever elſe be ſuppoſed, the language of theſe, reſpecting the heart, is concluſive. Hence, there is no ſuch occaſion for our having this power over our affections of heart, as there is, that we ſhould have it over our hands.

The morality of our actions is derived, from the heart, but that of the heart itſelf, is underived; it conſiſts in the heart alone. Now if the morality of the heart conſiſts in the very nature of the heart itſelf, a part from all conſideration of any antecedent, then it will be ſtill the ſame, whether it were, or were not, preceded by a power to manage our hearts by our volitions, as we manage our bodies, in the performance of bodily actions: and if the morality of the heart conſiſts in the very nature of the heart itſelf, it cannot vary with the variations of any previous power.

If there be no morality belonging to the heart itſelf, nor to, either natural power, or the want of it, then there is no morality in the caſe. No one will ſay that the morality lies either in power or in the want of power, it muſt then lie in the heart itſelf, and if it lies here, it muſt remain as long as the heart remains, whether there be or be not the ſame power over it that we have over our bodily actions.

Upon the whole, it ſeems to me highly improper to conclude that God will excuſe the *want* of a *willing mind*, becauſe he excuſes the want of external actions, when there is a *willing mind*.

2. There is another argument adduced to prove, that impenitent ſinners have the ſame power to make themſelves new hearts, which they have to perform the common actions of life. This argument is founded on the ſuppoſition that all the divine commands, invitations, exhortations, promiſes, admonitions, &c. take for granted, and go on the ſuppoſition that men have the ſame power to make themſelves new hearts, that they have to drink water and to eat bread.

I believe it will not be pretended, that the divine law or any other part of the holy ſcriptures, *expreſſley* aſſert that ſinners have ſuch a power. So that whatever is to be learned from the law or goſpel, muſt be learned by inference. Let us then take a ſummary view of them, that we may be the better prepared to judge whether they afford this inference or whether they really imply that ſinners have the power contended for.

The ſpirit of the divine law, apart from the goſpel, may, I think, be thus expreſſed. If you obey—if you love God with your whole heart, and your neighbour as yourſelf, you will be objects of divine complacence and you ſhall be happy forever; but if you fail in either of theſe points, you will be proper objects of divine wrath, and muſt be forever miſerable. The ſpirit of the invitations of the goſpel, and its promiſes, may be thus ſummed up, whoever has a holy heart, believes in Jeſus Chriſt, and repents of his ſins, ſhall be ſaved, but who ever does not love, believe and repent, ſhall be damned.

Now I aſk, according to what rules can the power of ſinners be inferred from this ſummary? For myſelf, I freely confeſs, I ſee no regular mode of making this inference, until we have either proved or taken for granted, that the law and goſpel would not be good and binding on the conſciences of ſinners, unleſs they have the ſame power to love, believe, and repent, that they have to move a finger. But I aſk,

Why is it not reasonable and proper for God to inform us as he has done in his law, what is lovely, and what hateful, in his sight? What leads to future and eternal felicity, and what to endless and awful misery? If a heart opposed to God, be *in itself* a hateful thing, and such as every conscience must disapprove, and if God loaths such a heart, why may he not properly say so? If such a heart leads to ruin, and if God will seal that ruin by his awful sentence, why may he not declare his determination to do so? If there be any unreasonableness in the opposition of God to such a heart, it must be because it is not in itself hateful. Some divines when treating on the subject of the sinner's ability, too plainly, suggest that it would be unreasonable for God to condemn one, for having a bad heart, if he had not the same power to change it, that he has to perform the common actions of life. How perfectly does this agree, not with the dictates of the *awakened* sinner's *conscience*, but with the feelings of the *hardened* sinner's *heart?*

If however, the gentlemen mean no more by the power which they ascribe to sinners, than faculties and capacities of mind, such as understanding----of feeling pleasure and pain, and of willing, the argument is wholly useless; because it proves no more than what has, not only, never been denied, by any one, but what is confidently affirmed by all men. No man believes, that any one creature, if destitute of these, can possibly commit any sin. Why then this labored proof?

These remarks seem equally suited to obviate the argument drawn from invitations, exhortations, &c. unless indeed, it should be contended, as some have contended, that the divine invitations to sinners, imply a *desire* on the part of God, at once *strong* and *insufficient*, that sinners may become holy, and happy. But, I think, this sentiment cannot, without great injustice, be charged on either of these gentlemen, or their adherents.

Such, in brief, are my remarks, on the arguments adduced, to ſhow that ſinners have power to make themſelves new hearts. But it ſeems proper to take ſome notice, in this place, of the manner in which it has been attempted to invalidate, what, at firſt ſight ſeems to be poſitive proof, that impenitent ſinners, have *not* what is commonly called natural power to make themſelves new hearts.

Many paſſages of ſcripture, taken literally, ſeem to aſſert the natural inability of ſinners, to make themſelves new hearts, without ſome *ſpecial* aſſiſtance of the moſt high. I ſhall confine myſelf to a ſingle declaration of our Saviour. *No man can come to me, except the Father who hath ſent me draw him.* If, when we would decide on the meaning of this paſſage, we muſt attend merely to the expreſſion itſelf, without bringing into view any other conſideration, we ſhould undoubtedly, eſteem it a flat denial that ſinners have the ſame power to make themſelves new hearts, which they have to perform the common actions of life: But in conſtruing it, ſome ſeem to have firſt decided that ſinners muſt either have this power, or elſe be inculpable for not becoming holy, and then, to make ſome ſenſe of the paſſage, they ſuppoſe it to intend no more than that ſinners are *unwilling*, or *morally* unable.

It is true, that we often ſay, we are *unable*, or that we *cannot*, when we mean in reality no more than that we are unwilling. This is done on different occaſions. Sometimes we mean that our hearts are ſo ſtrongly ſet againſt the propoſal, that we cannot turn them, as we can turn our hands. Thus when any perſon is extremely diſagreeable to us, we ſay we cannot be pleaſed with him. Sometimes, we only *pretend* to be deſtitute, in this caſe, of that power which we have to perform the common actions of life. To ſay we *will not*, comply with an invitation is affrontive. This may be avoided by *falſely* ſaying, we *cannot*. We mean to hide our unwillingneſs under the pre-

tence of natural inability. But did our Lord, employ words in this deluſive manner?

At one time, Chriſt ſays of ſinners, that they *cannot*, and at another, that they *will not* come to him: but this by no means ſhows that he intended the ſame thing, by theſe different modes of expreſſion. If it be true of any perſon, in any caſe, that he is deſtitute both of power and will, why may not our Saviour have intended to expreſs both, reſpecting ſinners? We are, in innumerable inſtances, both unable and unwilling. Perhaps this is the truth, in the caſe before us; and were there no hypotheſis to be maintained, ſhould we not thus, underſtand our Lord? If we ſuppoſe this paſſage to intend no more than want of will, for the ſake of accommodating it to any preconceived opinion, we ſurely ought firſt to eſtabliſh that opinion by unqueſtionable proof. It ſeems, the opinion to be accommodated, is, that ſinners cannot be criminal for not having holy hearts, unleſs they poſſeſs the ſame power to make them, which they have to perform the ordinary actions of life.

In order to eſtabliſh this opinion, it muſt be proved, in direct oppoſition to the ſettled belief, of theſe gentlemen, if I underſtand their ſcheme, that God has eſtabliſhed a ſure connexion between a ſuppoſable volition of the unrenewed ſinner to have a new heart, and his having it in conſequence. Until this is proved, it muſt be allowed, (which is alſo contrary to their ſcheme) that there is no evidence that ſinners are ſinners, for not being holy. Until one of theſe is done, they themſelves, ought to regard this opinion, as a mere aſſumption.

IV. I ſhall cloſe what I have to ſay on this ſubject at preſent, by mentioning ſome of the natural tendencies, and probable effects, of the manner in which theſe gentlemen treat the ſubject of the ſinner's power to make himſelf a new heart.

I. This doctrine tends to lead ſinners to believe, they can determine whether they are criminal, by aſcertaining whether they have the ſame power to make themſelves new hearts, that they have to perform the common actions of life. Although they ſhould find in themſelves, hearts altogether oppoſed to God, they could not, according to this doctrine, determine whether they were criminal, until they ſhould have determined the former queſtion. Following this courſe, ſhould they happen to determine according to truth, that they have not the ſame power, they would feel that in reality, they were not worthy of blame. This is the courſe which ſinners ought to purſue, if their criminality depends on their having this power. But the more aſſiduouſly any one purſues this courſe, the leſs will he attend to his heart itſelf, which, if he would diſcover his ill-deſert, is the moſt important object that can be propoſed for his attention; becauſe, in this alone, can he ſee his real ſinfulneſs. No reaſoning about his power, can ever give him a proper view of ſin.

If the doctrine of the ſinner's power, be an engine of ſo much importance, in an attempt to convince him of his criminality, for continuing impenitent, as ſome ſeem to ſuppoſe it, is it not ſurpriſing that it has not been even once employed by infinite wiſdom, in the whole of a large volume, one of the moſt important purpoſes of which, was to convince ſinners that they are criminal, not merely becauſe they omit the performance of ſuch duties as depend on their wills, but alſo, becauſe their wills and hearts are ſuch as they are. The principal method which God takes in the ſcriptures to convince ſinners, is to diſplay before them his own character, as it is exhibited in his works in general, and particularly in his wonderful works toward the children of men, and to lead them through their works, words and thoughts down into their own hearts; and then to call their attention to

the comparative equality of their ways and his own. While he is doing this, he conſtantly aſſures them, that they are in his hand, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, and that they have no more power to renew themſelves, than the Ethiopean has to change his colour, or the Leopard his ſpots—that they are without ſtrength—dead in treſpaſſes and ſins—and that they muſt be born again—new made—created anew, and that they *cannot* come to Chriſt.

Is it evinced by the experience of chriſtians themſelves, that they can procure future holy exerciſes, as eaſily as they can perform the common actions of life? When, in any thing like a proper frame of mind, they *will*, they *ſtrive* and *pray*, that their preſent holy affections may uninterruptedly continue and increaſe; yet theſe affections do not obey their will—they come not when called. Yet, they do not think themſelves the leſs criminal on this account.

Repentance does not take place, like common actions, by being previouſly willed. So far as natural cauſes are concerned, it is the very ſight of the heart itſelf that produces the effect.

2. This doctrine is ſuited to lead careleſs and ſecure ſinners, to put off, as far as poſſible; the day of their repentance; for, to them it appears to be an evil day. The belief of this doctrine greatly diminiſhes their ſenſe of danger. If they can change their hearts at pleaſure, they have nothing to fear, beſide the danger of being ſo ſuddenly ſnatched out of their ſtate of probation, as not to be able to advert to the one thing needful. Thus they are led to indulge themſelves in ſin, and harden their hearts againſt God.

3. Thoſe ſinners who are neither wholly ſecure, nor yet fully awakened, are in danger of being miſled and injured by this doctrine. They wiſh, in *their* way, to be renewed—they try to effect this change, but find it does not take place. They impute their failure to their own ignorance of the proper mode of working,

to effect it----they apply to those who have succeeded in a like attempt, for directions; but do not receive them. The manner cannot be told. All they learn is, that those of whom they enquire, did not change themselves----that God alone can work this change. Still they attempt but in vain to renew themselves; till at length they grow weary of disappointment, and give up both the pursuit, and their confidence in their own strength. But still, retaining the opinion that this power is essential to blameworthiness, they excuse themselves, by saying they have found by experience, that they have not the power, and of course, that they cannot be blamed. Such persons are rapidly hardened in sin, and are among the most successful and destructive teachers of the thoughtless and secure.

I have now given you my views of this subject, and have to apologize for the length and minuteness of it, and for transmitting it through the press: As I frequently repeat, I hope you will discover that the repetitions are not altogether in vain—they show the subject in views, at least a little different.

I have written thus lengthily and minutely, and sent it through the press, for two reasons. One of which is this. However clearly those gentlemen, you mention, may understand themselves, and however correct their real opinions may be, I believe that multitudes of others besides myself do not understand them. This publication, will I hope, help to awaken the attention, both of those who believe this doctrine, and those who doubt of the meaning of its advocates, to the subject, and second my solicitation of some further explanations. The other reason is this: I hope, not long first, to lay before the public a treatise of a much more extensive nature, which has already been publicly proposed, and which will involve this subject. In that, I wish to avoid as much as possible, such dry disquisitions, as this subject requires, in the present state of opinions, among many, in our section of

this country. Beſides, I hope to draw out ſuch explanations as will remove any doubts I entertain as to the beſt manner of treating the ſubject.

As to your query reſpecting the character of the Redeemer, I can only ſay at preſent, that I unequivocally, and without reſervation, believe that Jeſus Chriſt had a real human ſoul and human body, and that theſe were united in him as are the ſouls and bodies of other men. I further firmly believe, that in this man dwelt the *fulneſs* of the *Godhead bodily*----that this Godhead, or the ſelf-exiſtent God, was as truly and intimately united to this man, as our ſouls are united to our bodies. I do not believe however, that the divine and human nature of the Mediator were any more mixed, mingled, and confounded together, than are our mental and corporeal natures. I do not recollect, nor believe, that I have for many years directly, or indirectly, of deſign ſaid any thing inconſiſtent with this ſentiment. Yet, I confeſs I have queſtioned, and may have, by that means, offended ſome who either cannot or will not explain themſelves on this ſubject in a manner which I can underſtand. I confeſs I am ſhocked by any expreſſions which I underſtand to imply that in the Mediator, God *becomes man* --a creature; and that man *becomes* God, who is creator of all things.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 6, line 6 from bottom for : read , Page 9, line 24, for *these* read *those*. Page 11, line 28, for *its* read *it*. Page 16, line 5, for *any* read *my*.